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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAKE A VACATION IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

*Governor Schweitzer Chooses National Tourism Week to
Encourage Montanans to Get Out and Explore Their Home State*

Helena, MT – May 16, 2006 – Travelers from around the USA and all over the globe travel to Montana each year to spend their vacations. With all of our state's world-class natural beauty, outdoor recreation, western history and myriad destinations, it is no wonder that tourism has become one of Montana's most important economic drivers.

Nevertheless, many Montanans readily admit to not having scratched the surface in exploring their own Big Sky backyard. In the spirit of National Tourism week - that runs from May 13th - 21st - Governor Brian Schweitzer issued a challenge to all Montanans to get out and experience a new corner of Montana this coming year. "We know how fortunate we are to call Montana our home. Make a point this summer to travel our scenic highways, visit our historic and cultural attractions, fish or camp at one of our many state parks and experience our famous Montana hospitality for yourself."

With the escalating cost of gasoline and related travel expenses, this is the year you should plan a vacation a little closer to home. With the bounty of top-tiered and off-the-beaten-path destinations that exist all over Montana, you could spend a lifetime traveling the back roads of our Treasure State. Take a cue from all those national and international visitors; they're onto something big. Montana – Take a vacation in your own backyard.

Here is a list of ten plum Montana destinations for you to put on your travel agenda.

1. Beartooth Highway: Wind your way up this highway to heaven – from Red Lodge to Yellowstone Park – and immerse yourself in the area's recreational bounty. If you time it right, you'll definitely want to take in Cooke City's annual fish fry, August 4-5.

<http://www.cookecitychamber.org/>

2. Custer County Art Center: Fine art in a subterranean vault. Experience a dose of Montana's bountiful art culture in Mile's City. <http://www.ccac.milescity.org/>
3. Missoula's Lewis & Clark in the Rockies Bicentennial Festival: A spirited celebration of that intrepid, might we say dynamic duo. June 21 - July 9. <http://www.lewisandclarkintherockies.org>
4. Fort Peck Reservoir: Did you know that the shoreline of this mammoth body of water, located in northeastern Montana, is longer than the entire California Coast?! <http://visitmt.com>
5. Bob Marshall Wilderness: Hike it, horse it, fish it, camp it, photograph it...over 5.4 million acres of wildlands leaves plenty of room for getting in touch with your inner explorer. <http://visitmt.com>
6. Bannack State Park: One of the west's most well preserved ghost towns, visit Montana's first territorial capital the weekend of July 15-16, for a celebration of mining and life in this once rough and tumble town. There will be plenty of free activities and events for families. <http://www.bannack.org/>
7. Pompey's Pillar: For history buffs, take in "Clark on the Yellowstone", a National Bicentennial Signature Event, July 22-25. See for yourself the only remaining physical evidence from this epic journey 200 years ago. <http://www.clarkontheyellowstone.org/>
8. What The Hay: This one-of-a-kind, hay sculpting contest takes place September 9-10 and brings out the creativity of the farm and ranch community around Utica and Hobson. <http://visitmt.com>
9. Dinosaur Trail: Did you know that Montana has yielded some of the world's most significant dino discoveries? Visit all fifteen stops spread across the state on Montana's newly inaugurated Dinosaur Trail. Experience all our paleontological treasures. www.mtdinotrail.org
10. Philipsburg: The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently awarded Philipsburg a coveted designation as one of America's 2006 "Dozen Distinctive Destinations. Come discover why. <http://www.philipsburgmt.com/>.

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